

William golding's thesis of evil

Literature, British Literature



On the following pages the unique “ Lord of the Flies” and the 1950’s in Britain will be discussed.

The introduction will exclusively deal with the book of William Golding and the author himself. The basic information includes of course a summary, a portrait of the author, the island setting of the unique and a characterisation of the characters that are of value because of they are political signs and extremely crucial throughout the novel.

The primary part introduces the 1950’s in Britain with a historic survey that includes the Suez Crisis due to the fact that the crisis will be gone over in one of the main styles, too.

The three central styles in the main part are how the kids on the island refer to their old-fashioned system, how the theory of the political thinker Thomas Hobbes can be compared to the concepts of the “ Lord of the Flies” author William Golding and some examples from the history of the 1950’s will be related to William Golding’s idea of the evil in man.

The idea to consist of Thomas Hobbes is from the politic class where we discussed Thommas Hobbes and specifically his idea of guy. While checking out Lord of the Flies and some recensions I typically remembered this concepts.

The conclusion is a personal statement and a brief analysis of how realistic and comprehensible the specific subjects were.

Intro

The author “ William Golding” – a brief bio

William Golding was born upon Sept. 19, 1911 in Cornwall (in the following compare MSN Encarta). He was a British author who won the Nobel Reward for literature in 1983. In school he was already captivated with language however not really proficient at mathematical research studies.

Golding attended the Oxford University and planned to complete a degree in the natural sciences because his moms and dads wanted him to do so. However he soon switched to English which fit more to his “ temperament and aspiration to write”. His very first book, a volume of poems was published prior to he made his bachelor’s degree at Oxford, in addition to a diploma in education. Certainly Golding continued to compose but he likewise started a career as a social worker, acted and produced plays for a small London theatre. In 1939 Golding married Ann Brookfield and embarked upon a mentor career.

But by the outbreak of World War II Golding had to join the Royal Navy although he had just begun his work as an English and philosophy teacher at Bishop Wordsworth’s School in Salisbury. Golding served on different battleships until he became the commander of a rocket firing ship. When the war ended Golding reassumed teaching and began to write again.

The 1954 the publication of “ Lord of the Flies” in England was his first success. In 1959 the book became a success in the USA, too and it is considered one of the great works of 20th-century literature. Just like in “ Lord of the Flies”, the good and evil in human nature is the central theme in

Golding's other novels (e. g. " The Inheritors" (1955) and " Pincher Martin" (1956)), too.

Sir William Gerald Golding died on June 13, 1933.

Summary

(In the following compare MSN Encarta)

The story of " Lord of the Flies" takes place on a Pacific Island during a nuclear war. An evacuated group of english schoolboys gets downed in their plane due to warfare and no adults survive the plane crash. First of all the boys are able to accomplish the loss of civilization because the island offers enough water, fruits, wild pigs and even the chance of rescue. One of the boys, called Ralph, blows the conch which he finds in a lagoon to call up the other boys who have survived. The conch is a criteria for the others to select Ralph as their leader.

The boys build up a signal fire under Ralph's direction; they collect food and water, go hunting and organize themselves into a new society which is abutted to the regiment life of school. For Ralph the main objective is to be rescued from the island but for Jack, who is jealous of Ralph because he wants to be the chief, the killing of pigs is more important than the rescue. Moreover, the enjoyment at killing takes possession of Jack and he is not longer open to Ralph's reasonable arguments. The makeshift government under Ralph disintegrates with the novel progressing and a brutal gang arises from the hunters under the leadership of Jack which tries to destroy those " who have tried to form a purposeful, just society".

The brutality and savageness of this growing second group culminates in two homicides. Ralph gets hunted all over the island by the hunters, until he collapses on the beach where a naval officer is waiting.

Setting

William Golding does not accurately describe where the Island is located in the real world. (Below compare Lektürehilfen Lord of the Flies pp. 17-18) All we know is that it is located somewhere in the ocean. The reader gets told that it is a tropical island and that it is “shaped like a boat”. You can see a map below this text and this is one example how the reader may imagine the island while reading the novel.

That is a very interesting feature by the way: The reader does not get a drawing or another form of a picture of the island. But he is, together with the boys, exploring the island step by step so that he has got a clear imagination of it at the end of the novel.

This is just one idea of the island’s “composition”. The first location which is described is the beach including the bathing pool (water lagoon) and the platform where the meetings are being held. Not far away in the jungle is the fruit orchard where the boys can get their meals from.

Amongst the island is the jungle, including “Simon’s nature area” (that is where he goes to see plants and vegetation) and the pig’s head on the stick (the “Lord of the Flies”). The mountain is where Ralph, Jack and Simon wage their first expedition to. Moreover, it is the place where the boys make the

signal fire and the parachutist lands. In the end there is the “ Castle Rock” which becomes Jack’s base and Piggy’s location of death.

Characters in “ Lord of the Flies”

At first I want to describe Ralph because in the novel he is the first boy who is being introduced, too (below compare Lektürehilfen Lord of the Flies pp. 9-10). Ralph is a blond boy of twelve, is well-built and good-natured.

Furthermore he is a very charismatic person, so to say quite likable, and that was the deciding attribute for him being elected for leadership. Ralph is anxious to build up and keep going the signal fire to call attention to passing ships because of his strong belief that someone will come to rescue the boys.

Ralph uses the conch to call for the assembly and he personates democracy. He arranges votes concerning important decisions and he “[...] knows that it’s important for each of the boys to speak his mind”. Moreover, Ralph never uses force although most of the boys do not implement the decisions made by the assembly, “ instead he tries to talk sensibly to them”. Ralph’s personality changes during the Island stay and with his responsibilities. Problems like Jack or the beast are difficult for him to accomplish and he recognizes that he is not as intelligent as piggy what leads to a lack of self-confidence.

All things considered, Ralph is a basically good person, although he is not very skilled at being the chief because he should punish the boys for not finishing their duties.

Concerning Piggy I want to discuss his name at first (below compare Lektürehilfen Lord of the Flies pp. 14-15). Obviously his name refers to pigs and Jack is in favour of hunting pigs in the jungle. Piggy has several disabilities like his corpulence or his asthma and near blindness. These attributes set him apart from the other boys. He is more intelligent than most of the others and he is able to speak his mind in the assemblies. To Ralph Piggy adopts an advising position, he has rational solutions to problems. Piggy reminds the other boys and even the reader what rationally thinking people would do. With his death, and it is important to say that the conch “dies” with him, the last instance of rationality disappears.

“Piggy is Golding’s argument for the need of civilization and his case against man’s return to a more innocent state in nature”.

The third and last character I want to deal with is Jack (below compare Lektürehilfen pp. 10-12). I want to leave out Simon because he is often described as a metaphor to holiness and that is not the topic here.

Jack is described as “tall and thin, with red hair and freckles”. Apparently Jack is the character who has the most conflict with Ralph. When the reader gets to know Jack he is leading the boys’ choir along the beach. Here Jack refers to the rules he learned at school but it also shows his addiction to leadership and his cruelty. His choir has to march in the glaring sun and they are not allowed to rest until Simon nearly faints.

Jack often tries to achieve his aims with force and brutality later in the novel, but even the first scene with the boys’ choir shows that “there is something

about his manner that suggests military or authoritarian power” . Piggy is often attacked by him although or maybe even because he is weaker than Jack.

Later on in the novel Jack becomes a savage who is only conducted by his primitive instincts. He cares only for his own power and not for the common good and when he gains control of the boys he demonstrates another way in which power may be used. The fear of the beast becomes Jack’s instrument to achieve his power. But instead of Ralph’s methods to deal with the problems such as “ the beast”, the extreme methods of Jack could be more useful. But that is a matter of opinion.

So Jack is the counterpart to Ralph – a mix of both of them could be the ticket to success.

The conch in “ Lord of the Flies”

The author William Golding uses a lot of symbols permanently throughout the novel. These symbols may be objects as well as persons or animals. The most important and mostly used political symbols in “ Lord of the Flies” are the conch and Ralph.

The conch. To me this is a very apparent symbol in “ Lord of the Flies”. The conch represents law and order and democracy, too. When Ralph blows the conch it is a signal for all other boys to come to the assembly to discuss important topics (firstly used on page 17, ll. 8-14). But the second meaning of it and even the more important one is that the boy who got the conch has a right to speak in the assembly. Piggy says on page 42, ll. 13-14 “ I got the

conch. You let me speak.” This quote shows that “ Piggy embraces the ideology of a democracy” and he feels to deserve the right to speak when he holds the conch in his hands. Piggy also often tries to help the younger boys to articulate themselves facing the older ones. So, for Piggy, the littluns matter just as much as the older boys do.

The symbolism of Ralph is already illustrated in the characterization.

Survey of the 1950's in Britain

At the end of World War II Britain still seemed to be a powerful nation and was considered to be a superpower just like Russia or the USA (Below compare “ The Twentieth Century World, pp. 145-146). The wartime government under the direction of Winston Churchill commissioned Sir William Beveridge to create a plan which makes life better for the British people.

They had also passed an Education Act in 1944 which contained that all children should go on to a secondary school. That included that every eleven years old took an examination which determined which type of secondary school a child should attend. In 1945 Churchill and the Conservative Party were deserted in the General Election and the Labour Party was elected by the British people who wanted a change. The so called “ Beveridge Report” was set into practice by the new government. In the late 1940's the government (factual after the war) had to continue rationing of food and clothes and was forced to introduce bread rationing. Even during the war it was not necessary to ration bread at all. The last straw was that

the National Coal Board was not able to provide enough coal for the people in the severe winter of 1946-47.

So the Conservative Party was re-elected in 1951 and Winston Churchill was Prime Minister again until he retired in 1955 and Anthony Eden (who also came from the Conservative Party) became Prime Minister.

The Suez crisis. The governments of Britain and France controlled a company which was in possession of the Suez Canal which runs through Egypt.

President Nasser of Egypt nationalised the canal in 1956 and Britain as well as France sent troops to Egypt “ to get the canal back”. The problem was that the Russians supported Nasser and there was the danger of a nuclear attack on the Russian’s side. So President Eisenhower of the USA told Britain and France to return their troops, otherwise he would “ cut off American economic aid”.

This menace was too hard for Britain and France, so they withdrew and Britain was no longer a world’s superpower but was dependent on the USA’s support.

How do the boys keep to the directives they learned?

The topic that will be discussed now is how the boys refer to the rules they learned at school.

At the beginning of the novel the behaviour of the boys is kept to the rules they learned at school. Jack Merridew leads his choir very severe and that is the first example. Jack lets his choir march “ approximately in step in two

parallel lines”(page 19, ll. 29-31). This shows that even Jack uses the directives that the school taught him.

Later on Ralph recommends that the boys “ ought to have a chief to decide things”(page 22, ll. 10-11). The idea of a chief is also abutted to the rules of behaviour taught at school. So the boys construct a command structure but not in a totalitarian way for the boys elect their chief and have a right to speak in the assembly. This assembly is firstly just a meeting convened by Ralph. But after a certain “ reform” thought out by Ralph the meeting becomes the assembly. This reform is Ralph’s idea to give the conch to the boy who wants to speak in the assembly.

This happens on page 33 ll. 15-39; Ralph decides that the boy who holds the conch in his hands will not be interrupted by anyone except for Ralph himself. And when Piggy gets the conch and wants to speak up the assembly develops (ll. 38-39 “ Piggy took off his glasses and blinked at the assembly while he wiped them on his shirt”). In school there are assemblies with the students and the teachers to decide about miscellaneous topics and issues. The gymnsiums are often used as an “ assembly hall” because they are big enough to accept all the students. Here is one example how a proper assembly hall of a school could look like:

(compare attachment

“ pictures”)

Ralph can be compared with the man standing on the stage, the other boys are the students sitting in the assembly hall. The conch can be compared

with the microphone the man holds in his hands (in the 1950's actually it was not a microphone but a megaphone). The one who holds the microphone is the one who may speak – just like the function of the conch during the assemblies.

Historical evidence for Golding's idea of the evil

“ It [Lord of the Flies] then illustrates and tries to prove the authors belief in the baseness of human nature of which even children are not exempt. This is documented by the regression of almost the entire group into a state of primitive savagery, fittingly mirroring many a political development and fact in our adult, enlightened and scientific twentieth-century world”

This quote shows Golding's thesis of the evil and the ignominy in every human creature of the entire world.

When the brutality and primitiveness of Jack and his gang finally lead to a manhunt for Ralph, the reader realizes that despite the strong sense of British character and civility that has been instilled in the youth throughout their lives, the boys have backpedaled and shown the underlying savage side existent in all humans. In the following some examples of the 1950's politics in Britain that could prove William Golding's idea will be presented.

The first example I chose is from 1957; the Conservative Party had passed a Rent Act (also called the “ Tory Act”) what “ had removed all rent and tenure controls on privately rented flats and houses” . Here one part of Golding's intention in “ The Lord of the Flies” and also in his other novels is realized, namely the decrease of control. The Communist Party called the “ Tory Act”

a “ savage attack on living standards” . The landlords, that is to say the men who owned property, could force their tenants to pay every rent increase which the landlord demanded, otherwise they were evicted.

So the Rent Act caused less controls, but it “ had also bred an an unscrupulous type of property exploitation” so the landlords took advantage of that. This historical event could support Golding’s statement of the evil that emerges when the human is not controlled by any institutions.

The second example refers to the international politics concerning the Suez Crisis (compare “ Survey of the 1950’s”). The Soviet Union was ready to perform a nuclear strike but Britain and France were not willing to withdraw from Egypt. It was only after the USA told them to do so or to accept no more economic aid.

The USA could here be accounted to be the controlling institution, Britain and France are the controlled ones. Without the USA’s instruction, it could have come to a war of a far greater dimension than the conflict in Egypt. So the Suez Crisis is also potential to confirm Golding’s ideal.

Thomas Hobbes vs. William Golding

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) was a political philosopher whose political theory, and with that his idea of man, is in some points very similar to the belief of William Golding.

Hobbes’ vision of the world is strikingly original and still relevant to contemporary politics. His main concern is the problem of social and political

order: how human beings can live together in peace and avoid the danger and fear of civil conflict. Hobbes answer to this problem is to give the obedience to a sovereign, that is to say a person or group empowered to decide every social and political issue. Otherwise what awaits us is a 'state of nature' that closely resembles anarchy and civil war – a situation of universal insecurity, where everyone has reason to fear violent and death.

Thomas Hobbes called this sovereign the "Leviathan", which was also the name of his most important work (Leviathan, 1651). Hobbes' idea is in some aspects near to Golding's idea of man. In Hobbes idea it is true that every human being is capable of killing any other. Human motives are guided by unenlightened self-interest, and these could, if left unchecked, have highly destructive consequences.

The Leviathan is the State – whether in the form of an absolute monarch or a democratic parliament, it does not matter. The important point is that the State will be given a monopoly on violence and absolute authority. In return, the State promises to exercise its absolute power to maintain a state of peace (by punishing criminals, etc.)

One of the interesting elements of Hobbes's story is that concepts like morality, liberty, justice, property, etc. have no natural, intrinsic or eternal meaning. They are pure social constructions. They are generated and imposed by the Leviathan, through his laws and institutions, to keep war and social disorder at a low level.

In “ Lord of the Flies” Golding shows what happens when civilization with all it’s rules and structures drops out of human life. He even carries it to extremes by using children who are considered to be innocent because of their youth. The themes of Goldings novels are often the fallen nature of man or the good and evil in human heart to name but a few of that kind . According to this Golding’s idea of man is very similar to that of Thomas Hobbes. Both see the necessity of a state which controls the citizens and both see the savagery (or in Hobbes theory it is the self interest) in human’s nature what can lead to homicide.

In the end the ideas of William Golding and Thomas Hobbes look very similar. Both ideas inhere the thought that society would end up in anarchy just like Jack’s group in “ Lord of the Flies” which is just hunting and having fun. Golding sais it is necessary to have civilization and rules to domesticate the people. Hobbes as well emanates from the idea of the evil man and compiles a theory of state to control the human nature.

Conclusion/personal statement

Was it comprehensible to compare Thomas Hobbes idea of man with that of William Golding? The analysis shows yes and I think it is right. Of course the source was not Thomas Hobbes whole work “ Leviathan” because it consists of 4 books and would have been enormous to evaluate. The idea to analyse Hobbes political theories comes from the politics class .

It is very interesting that the ideas of a man with a such pessimistic view of man’s nature is so easy comparable to those of a political philosopher of

another time. Consolidated it was a very interesting experience to see how similar views two different men could have.

To prove Golding's view of human nature on the basis of the two historical events in the 1950's was a very difficult business because there was no source which gave evidence to my thesis. The sources were the " Cambridge University Press" and " Lord of the Flies". Actually the novel itself was not the source that was compared with the history but it was Golding's point of view.

Of course this point of view is represented in " Lord of the Flies" but it was more proximate to refer the point of view itself to the history of the 1950's in Britain than the incidents in the novel. And that is because the novel does not reflect the political and social climate of the 1950's in Britain, it tells a fictitious story on an island which is not accurately located, but it does reflect the authors belief and his view of man. And his belief can be compared with the 1950's, it was even confirmed by some events of that time.

All things considered it was very interesting to read and to examine the " Lord of the Flies" in relation to British history and even to a political philisopher who was a very interesting man with even more interesting theories.